

MORTIMER, ABBY & MARTHA

MORTIMER: [*He looks about the room*] By the way, I left a large envelope around here last week. It's one of the chapters of my book on Thoreau. Have you seen it? [MORTIMER *starts searching the room, cupboards, desk, etc.*]

MARTHA: What, Mortimer?

MORTIMER: My chapter on Thoreau!

MORTIMER: Now, where could I have put that . . . ?

ABBY: I do hope the play tonight will be something you can enjoy for once. It may be something romantic. What's the name of it?

MORTIMER: [HE *is still searching for the envelope*] Murder Will Out!

ABBY: Oh, dear!

MORTIMER: When the curtain goes up the first thing you see will be a dead body. . . . [*He lifts the window seat and sees one. Not believing it, he drops the window seat again and turns away. He looks back quickly toward the window seat, opens it again, stares in. He goes slightly mad for a moment. He drops the window seat again and sits on it, as if to hold it down,*

When MORTIMER [*in a strained voice*] Aunt Abby!

ABBY: Yes, dear?

MORTIMER: You were going to make plans for Teddy to go to that sanitarium—Happy Dale.

ABBY: Yes, dear, it's all arranged. Dr. Harper was here today and brought the things for Teddy to sign. Here they are.

MORTIMER: He's got to sign them right away!

ABBY: That's what Dr. Harper thinks. . . . Then there won't be any legal difficulties after we pass on.

MORTIMER: [*Glancing through the papers*] He's got to sign them this minute! He's down in the cellar—get him up here right away.

MARTHA: There's no such hurry as that.

ABBY: When he starts working on the Canal you can't get his mind on anything else.

MORTIMER: Teddy's got to go to Happy Dale *now—tonight!*

MARTHA: Oh, no, Mortimer! That's not until after we're gone!

MORTIMER: : Right away, I tell you!—right away!

ABBY: Mortimer, how can you say such a thing? Why, as long as we live we won't be separated from Teddy.

START

MORTIMER: [*Trying to be calm*] Listen, darlings, I'm frightfully sorry, but I've got some shocking news for you. Now, we've all got to try to keep our heads. You know, we've sort of humored Teddy because we thought he was harmless.

MARTHA: Why, he *is* harmless!

MORTIMER: He *was* harmless. That's why he has to go to Happy Dale—why he has to be confined.

ABBY: Mortimer, why have you suddenly turned against Teddy?—your own brother!

MORTIMER: You've got to know sometime. It might as well be now. Teddy's killed a man!

MARTHA: Nonsense, dear.

MORTIMER: [*points to the window seat*] There's a body in the window seat!

ABBY: [*Not at all surprised*] Yes, dear, we know.

MORTIMER: You *know?*

MARTHA: Of course, dear, but it has nothing to do with Teddy.

ABBY: Now, Mortimer, just forget about it—forget you ever saw the gentleman.

MORTIMER: *Forget?*

ABBY: We never dreamed you'd peek.

MORTIMER: But who is he?

ABBY: His name's Hoskins—Adam Hoskins. That's really all I know about him—except that he's a Methodist.

MORTIMER: That's all you know about him? "Well, what's he doing here? What happened to him?"

MARTHA: He died.

MORTIMER: Aunt Martha, men don't just get into window seats and die.

ABBY: No, he died first.

MORTIMER: But how?

ABBY: Mortimer, don't be so inquisitive! The gentleman died because he drank some wine with poison in it.

MORTIMER: How did the poison get in the wine?

MARTHA: We put it in wine because it's less noticeable. When it's in tea it has a distinct odor.

MORTIMER: *You* put it in the wine?

ABBY: Yes. And I put Mr. Hoskins in the window seat because Dr. Harper was coming.

MORTIMER: So you knew what you'd done! You didn't want Dr. Harper to see the body!

ABBY: Not at tea! That wouldn't have been very nice! All right, you know about it and you can forget about it. I do think we have the right to our own little secrets.

MARTHA: MORTIMER *stands looking at his aunts, stunned*, MARTHA *turns to* ABBY] Oh, Abby, while I was out I dropped in on Mrs. Schultz. She's much better, but she would like to have us take Junior to the movies again.

ABBY: We must do that tomorrow or the next day.

STOP

MARTHA: This time we'll go where *we* want to go, Junior's not going to drag me into another one of those scary pictures.

ABBY: They shouldn't be allowed to make pictures just to frighten People.

[They exit into the kitchen. MORTIMER, dazed, looks around the room, goes to the telephone and dials a number]

MORTIMER: *[Into telephone]* City desk. . . . Hello, Al. Do you know who this *is?* *[Pause]* That's right. Say, Al, when I left the office, I told you where I was going, remember? *[Pause]* Well, where did I say? *[Pause]* Uh-huh. Well, it would take me about half an hour to get to Brooklyn. What time have you got? *[He looks at his watch]* That's right. I must be here. *[He hangs up, then suddenly leaps out of the chair toward the kitchen]* Aunt Martha! Aunt Abby! Come in here! *[The two sisters bustle in]* What are we going to do? What are we going to do?

MARTHA: What are we going to do about what, dear?

MORTIMER: There's a body in there!

ABBY: Yes, Mr. Hoskins'.

START

MORTIMER: Good God, I can't turn you over to the police. But what am I going to do?

MARTHA: Well, for one thing, stop being so excited.

ABBY: And for pity's sake stop worrying. We told you to forget about it.

MORTIMER: *Forget about it?* My dear Aunt Abby, can't I make you realize that something has to be done!

ABBY: *[A little sharply]* Mortimer, you behave yourself! You're too old to be flying off the handle like this!

MORTIMER: But Mr. Hotchkiss . . .

ABBY: Hoskins, dear.

MORTIMER: Well, whatever his name is, you can't leave him there!

MARTHA: We don't intend to, dear.

ABBY: Teddy's down in the cellar now digging a lock.

MORTIMER: You mean you're going to bury Mr. Hotchkiss in the cellar?

MARTHA: Why, of course, dear. That's what we did with the others.

MORTIMER: Aunt Martha, you can't bury Mr. . . . *Others?*

ABBY: The other gentlemen.

MORTIMER: When you say others—do you mean—others? More than one others?

MARTHA: Oh, yes, dear. Let me see, this is eleven, isn't it, Abby?

ABBY: No, dear, this makes twelve.

[MORTIMER *backs up and sinks stunned on the stool beside the desk*]

MARTHA: Oh, I think you're wrong, Abby. This is only eleven, you really shouldn't count the first one.

ABBY: Oh, I was counting the first one. So that makes it twelve.

[*The telephone rings.* MORTIMER, *picks up the receiver*]

MORTIMER: Hello! Hello. Oh, hello, Al. My, it's good to hear your voice! Oh, no, Al, I'm as sober as a lark. No, I just called you because I was feeling a little Pirandello. Pirandel. . . . You wouldn't know, Al. Look, I'm glad you called. Get hold of George right away. He's got to review the play tonight. I can't make it. No, you're wrong, Al. I'll tell you about it tomorrow. . . . No—Well, George has got to cover the play tonight! This is my department and I'm running it! You get hold of George! [*He hangs up and sits for a moment, trying to collect himself*] Now, let's see, where were we? [*suddenly*] *Twelve!*

STOP

MARTHA: Yes, Abby says we should count the first one and that makes twelve.

ABBY: Yes, Mortimer. Oh dear, **it's getting late**, I'll have to get things started in the kitchen. [*To* MORTIMER] I wish you could stay to dinner, dear.

MORTIMER: I couldn't eat a thing.

MORTIMER *stands dazed and then summons his courage and goes to the window seat, opens it and peeks in, then closes it and backs away.*